

Homework in the Lower Elementary

Some parents express concern that Montessori Seeds of Education does not expect students to complete nightly homework assignments. They are surprised to learn—Yes, we do have homework! We have a lot of homework. It does not necessarily show up on worksheets or on assignment pages at the end of each day. So, adults may not recognize the many forms of Montessori school homework.

Listed below, within categories for easy reference, are various activities we consider appropriate homework for our students. We encourage you to review the list with your children. Make plans to incorporate these ideas into your home life. Be careful not to over-schedule your child's time. Leave plenty of time for free play and daydreaming. Here is work we expect our students to do outside of school hours.

Academic Skills Development—children may choose to:

1. Read for one-half hour each evening
2. Have parents read stories and poetry out loud each evening
3. Keep a journal or diary
4. Write letters to friends and relatives
5. Write stories, poems and reports
6. Memorize math facts and
7. Work on speed
8. Memorize spelling
9. Keep personal alphabetized book of new vocabulary and spelling words
10. Practice lists of phonogram and puzzle words (as sent home by guide)
11. Visit the public library regularly to check out books on various subjects—nature, history and biographies

House and Garden—children may:

1. Care for personal belongings, bed and bath environment every morning and every evening
2. Make own lunch
3. Share in meal preparation and clean-up daily
4. Help clean and care for the home weekly
5. Assist in laundry weekly
6. Keep a small part of the garden
7. Help plan family life, shop for groceries

The Arts—children may:

1. Day dream
2. Draw, sketch, paint or illustrate impressions of events
3. Recite poetry
4. Take creative dramatics, organize skits and plays
5. Take music lessons and practice playing for family and friends
6. Take dance lessons and practice dancing for family and friends
7. Sing in a choir, sing with family and friends

8. Visit art museums
9. Attend concerts and operas
10. Attend dance performances
11. Go to the theater
12. Write reviews or impressions of events

Nature and the Out of Doors—children may:

1. Care for and ride horses
2. Take hikes
3. Ride bikes
4. Go caving, rappelling, snorkeling
5. Camp out
6. Watch and study birds
7. Take botany walks
8. Hunt for rocks and fossils
9. Keep a natural aquarium and collect items for it from creeks and ponds
10. Keep a nature journal
11. Visit nature preserves, natural science centers and natural history museums
12. Play outdoors
13. Collect shells, rocks, and other specimens of nature

Family Nights—children may:

1. Play board games
2. Play parlor games
3. Work crossword or jigsaw puzzles
4. Participate in family council discussions
5. Collect stamps or coins

Crafts—children may:

1. Sew, crochet, embroider, weave
2. Do carpentry
3. Build models

Social Activism—children may:

1. Keep a scrapbook of newspaper articles on one's favorite issues
2. Write a letter to the editor or to public servants
3. Participate in environmental clean-ups
4. Organize neighborhood recycling
5. Rally and march

Volunteer Work—children may:

1. Visit an elder
2. Do tasks for the infirm
3. Walk dogs
4. Baby-sit
5. Help younger children learn to do something

Sports—children may:

1. Play a team sport
2. Participate in gymnastics or swimming
3. Skate

Clubs and Groups—children may:

1. Join a scout troop
2. Be active in environmental groups
3. Organize children for peace groups

Remember: children learn by doing. They want and need to participate, actively, in all areas of family life and living. They are physically tough, gregarious, and quite capable of responsibility. What can adults do to help with the homework?

TV—parents should:

1. Turn it off. Better yet, do not turn it on in the first place. The worst thing about TV is that it consumes precious time and displaces more valuable pursuits.
2. Know that, generally speaking, the least significant pursuit on this list is more valid and enriching for the children than the finest television program.
3. Realize that every half hour children spend in front of the TV can be a half hour spent breaking down family life, shortening concentration span, reducing self-motivation, increasing irritability, developing hyperactivity or passivity, regardless of the quality of the program.
4. Plan ahead, if there is one program during the week that you feel your children simply must not miss. Do some research, have a discussion, and have your child read, write and illustrate. Write a list of questions to be answered. Watch the program with your children. Discuss it afterwards. Recall the program together days later. Remark on details remembered. Relate it to something that comes up.

Radio and Tape Player—parents should:

1. Create the family culture, carefully selecting music for your home.
2. Remember children are members of the family and while under the age of 13 years are too young for unlimited choice in music, and for attending rock concerts.

Video Games—parents should:

1. Sell them at a garage sale.
2. Store them in the attic and bring them down for one hour once a month.

Videos and Movies—parents should:

1. Read the book together with your children before watching any movie. Once a month is plenty.
2. Read the complete, original, unabridged version of children's classics and fairy tales.
3. Children under the age of 13 are too young for unlimited choice in movies.

Montessori education is continuous. Therefore, it is important that children have the continued opportunity, in the home, to assume responsibility, endure the natural consequences, manage time, and choose activities wisely from a carefully prepared selection. The child needs a “prepared environment” at home as much if not more than at school.

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